

Corps grants another 18-day extension to Missouri DNR on St. Johns

By Liz Anderson

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources has requested another extension until December on the Corps of Engineers' request for Water Quality Certification for the St. Johns flood control project, and the Corps has granted an extension until November 18.

The decision to grant the extension was made in coordination with the St. Johns Levee and Drainage District.

The Fish and Wildlife Service sent

a letter dated October 7 to Col. Jack V. Scherer, sending copies to the FWS Regional Director in Minnesota, to the Missouri Department of Conservation, EPA, Kansas City and to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, including a letter dated July 15 from the Missouri Department of Conservation to Fish and Wildlife.

The latter was apparently the Conservation Department's response to the FWS Coordination Act Report, which the Service had referenced in

the report as not having had time to receive.

The Corps' response was hand delivered to the DNR last Monday.

Hopefully, the Department of Natural Resources will grant unconditioned Water Quality Certification on November 18.

The next step will be signing the Record of Decision on the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for the St. Johns Bayou-New Madrid Floodway flood

control project.

If they do not grant Water Quality Certification, it will mean an appeal to the Missouri Clean Water Commission.

We reviewed the events of the past five months concerning this project.

July 19: the notice of completion of the Final (Revised) SEIS was published in the Federal Register, triggering a 30-day comment period (comments due by August 19); and the Corps applied to the Missouri Depart-

ment of Natural Resources for the 401 Water Quality Certification.

The original date for MDNR to furnish certification (according to their own policy) was in September. They requested a 60-day extension so that they could have a Public Hearing on the proposal in East Prairie.

That public hearing was held September 30, and the DNR gave everyone until October 8 to comment on the proposal to them.

The Corps agreed to about a 43-

day extension to November 1.

The October 7 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service letter stated strong opposition to the project and strong criticism of the revised SEIS.

The Corps felt that MDNR did not receive the rebuttal in time to consider it had they been forced to issue water quality certification by November 1 and would have been more likely to include water quality certification conditions based on biased information.